

FIRE EXPLOSION DUE TO INRUSH OF OXYGEN

Investigation of American Club "Blaze" Was Practically Finished Yesterday.

YOUNG LAD RELEASED

Theory of Incendiary Work by Enemies Has No Foundation in Evidence.

The American Club fire enquiry was practically concluded yesterday afternoon and the evidence of several firemen seemed to pretty well establish the fact that the explosion in the club was caused by the inrush of fresh oxygen. Deputy Chief Russell said he had fought several fires where severe explosions had occurred, and quoted instances of an old fire at the corner of Church and Wellington streets, which was caused by a gas leak.

Chief Smith and District Chief Sinclair thought it was an air explosion. Capt. R. H. Foster was in the building when the fire broke out and declared that the explosion and falling of the floor were two distinct events; and Assistant Architect Price declared that there could have been no great explosion in the building because it would have smashed the building, and surrounding buildings. The building, in his opinion, was a veritable firetrap.

The substance of the evidence of the four Austrians was that they knew nothing of the explosion or fire, and had never discussed it among themselves. None of them knew of the fire until the next morning and one of them said he came down to the club only to find it had been closed.

Resumes on Saturday. "I will not adjourn this inquiry this afternoon, but will sit again Saturday afternoon and hear from Mr. Day, the mover of the resolution following the fire, whether he has any more evidence to offer, when he framed it. Supt. Provincial Police Rogers said at the conclusion.

The boy Ernie Zeigler, whose room Detective Nurey was instructed to search, was let go last night. Nurey said he had found nothing in the room, but a letter from his sister concerning a job in a departmental store. The lad must remain in town, till the wind-up of the enquiry on Saturday.

After the fire broke out, the building was closed and all the available oxygen was suddenly inrush of cold air into a room which was filled with dynamite.

Exploded. Deputy Chief Russell explained in answer to Lieut. Col. Greer's question, that the explosion was of that kind, according to the deputy chief, an explosion of that nature is to be expected, and it is common that the force of such an explosion should lift the roof up.

Explosion and Collapse. Capt. R. H. Foster said he saw the fire in the hallway when the floor went in and he placed the time of the explosion at five minutes after the explosion and the unbroken windows.

Chief Smith's evidence was taken in the morning, and he gave his opinion that the fire had been burning a long time before it was noticed.

Q—"What would you say about the explosion and the unbroken windows?" A—"The explosion must have been upwards."

Q—"What do you think could have caused the explosion?" A—"I think it was the inrush of fresh oxygen into the hot smoke would do it."

District Chief George Sinclair said he was the first of the explosion.

Peter Suwak was the first of the day cleaner and house porter, and came to work at 7 o'clock in the morning and left at 5 p.m. He said he was an Austrian and had been in Canada about seven years.

Q—"What did you do before you came to the American Club?" A—"I worked at Young's lunch for four weeks."

Q—"Did you see any fire?" A—"Yes, I saw a fire in the morning."

Q—"No, I leave at 5 o'clock, so to bed at 5 o'clock and come to work in the morning and find the fire."

No War Discussion. Mike Hoack, another Austrian, employed at the American Club, said he had been in Canada three years. Previous to his coming to Canada he had been in the Woodbine. He left at 6.30 the night before the fire.

Q—"Did you hear any discussion around the club about the war?" A—"No, I didn't hear."

Q—"Did you hear any person making threats about destroying the building?" A—"No, I didn't hear."

Q—"Did you ever hear anything about blowing up the club?" A—"No, I didn't hear."

Q—"Did you see any trouble around there?" A—"No, I didn't see."

Q—"Did you see the place on fire?" A—"No, I didn't see."

Other Witnesses. Donald Yeltman, doorman, R. Turner, house porter, H. Kruger, a Hebrew bell-boy, and Arthur Cooper, porter, and J. H. Allen, a bookkeeper, all swore they had never heard any discussion on the war, or threats of doing damage to the club building.

F. L. Riggs, the manager of the American Club, said he had only taken that position five days before the fire and therefore was not conversant with many of the details. The steward, he believed, had hired the foreman, E. H. Day, bartender, had framed the published resolution when twenty members were present.

"More than anything, the members regretted the death of Mr. Halston. The club had been the recruiting headquarters for the American Legion, and I presume that that some foreigner of unbalanced mind, might think it a grand thing to destroy the building, and do not imagine that there was anything serious in their thoughts, but it got into the resolution, which was drawn up by Mr. Day."

Q—"Was anything said at the meeting which would lead you to believe there was any definite evidence?" A—"Oh, no, it was the natural excitement, I think, of the moment, following so closely the Ottawa fire."

Architect's Evidence. Assistant Chief Architect G. P. Price worked east of the burned building again yesterday morning and when recalled said he had no reason to change his opinion of yesterday that the fire had started about the centre of the building between the ceiling of the ground floor and the floor of the second.

Q—"What would you say as to the weight of the big dome that fell?" A—"I couldn't say, it would only be guessing. It was very heavy."

Q—"How was it attached to the ceiling?" A—"It was secured only by 2-inch nails to the inch board above."

Q—"Was that good construction?" A—"It was not."

Q—"How would you describe the progress of the fire?" A—"I think it started at the ceiling and went up the wall, or up the partitions."

Q—"There was sufficient fuel to carry it up into the ceiling, yes, it was a veritable fire trap."

In reply to a question concerning the effects of the explosion, witness said: "It appears to me that in that building there was no great explosion. The clock in the building was in the room and it is still going. Another thing, if there had been a great explosion it would have smashed the building across the road. That would be the first building affected by the explosion."

Contractor on Stand. Richard Gilday, roofing contractor, said he had been on the roof of the club the day before the fire. Both his men were Canadians and he was positive that neither had used any fire during their work.

W. P. Pullan said he knew that four Austrians were employed at the club.

Q—"Did you ever hear them or any of the other Austrians?" A—"No, I didn't hear them."

Pullan said it would be hard for anyone to get in the club without being seen.

Reading-Room Empty. Earl F. Huser, of Montreal, who escaped from the burning building, said he had been in the reading room the night before the fire. He said he was awakened by smoke and went sure at first that the fire was in his building. He declared that after his escape down the rope he heard two explosions.

Q—"Did you hear any explosion?" A—"Yes, I heard two explosions."

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OPERATIONS OF NICKEL TRUST ARE UNDER FIRE

Col. Currie Repeats Charge That Krupp's Are Really in Control.

DEFENDS HIS RECORD

He Declares He Was Deprived of Honors Which He Won Fairly.

(Continued From Page 1).

counseled the government to proceed with great prudence in making large commitments. Mr. Boulay (Rimouski) adjourned the debate.

Col. Currie, in opening, said that the Canadian house of commons had set an example to the rest of the empire. He congratulated Sir Wilfrid Laurier on having seconded the prime minister's resolution providing for an extension of the parliamentary term. There was far less partisan feeling than in the last session, and the public men of Canada than among the public men of Britain. No doubt there was some political sniping now and then across the floor of the house but it was done in the light of duty. There was also sniping going on outside the house, but it was done in the light of duty, and sometimes a soldier or a politician found himself stabbed in the back.

Valuable Lessons Learned. "Since we have opened Canadians had made two discoveries about themselves. They had found themselves able to recruit, equip, arm and feed a fighting force of 100,000 men. They had learned that the Canadian was as good a fighter as any soldier in Europe. Canadians had also learned that they were capable of doing their own resources the present tremendous war. The finance minister had asked them for fifty million dollars and they had given him one hundred million. If a proper policy was pursued by the government, if our industries were stimulated, if our provinces were developed, if our country made this war pay, the finance minister would find that he could borrow from the Canadian people not only the fifty million dollars but five hundred million dollars. (Applause.)

Must Conserve Nickel. Turning to the budget proposals of the government, Col. Currie said that the retroactive feature of the tax on war profits would not doubt operate on the nickel industry. He had endeavored to break the strangle hold that the American trust had on the nickel industry.

Col. Currie then spoke of the necessity of conserving our natural resources and of mobilizing the resources of the country. He said that the nickel industry was controlled by German syndicates and a great part of the nickel deposits of the Sudbury district were controlled by Krupp.

German gunmaker, thru trustees residing in the United States, Canada and elsewhere, had been exporting nickel to the United States. He had endeavored to break the strangle hold that the American trust had on the nickel industry.

Inter-Empire Trade. Increased trade, Col. Currie pointed out, was the only matter which was likely to be done as a result of the war. He said that the nickel industry was controlled by German syndicates and a great part of the nickel deposits of the Sudbury district were controlled by Krupp.

He complimented the Valcartier camp, spoke of the great armada that took the first contingent to England, and touched upon the life on Salisbury Plain. He said that the nickel industry was controlled by German syndicates and a great part of the nickel deposits of the Sudbury district were controlled by Krupp.

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THE TORONTO WORLD

REGINA, Sask., Feb. 22.—With five members of the executive of the Licensed Victuallers' Association under arrest on charges of conspiring to bribe members of the legislature with another member, who refused to answer questions put to him by the house, in custody of the sergeant-at-arms, with one royal commission promised by the government; with one high official of the highways department a fugitive and thefts of money and documents already admitted; with the public interest, and with the charges filed twelve days ago by J. E. Bradshaw, an opposition member, the government has refused to grant an enquiry into any of the charges against select ministers, except that against H. A. McNabb, which was referred to one of the select committees already at work upon enquiries with which the opposition has refused to have anything to do.

After refusing on half a dozen occasions to permit investigation into any of the charges by royal commissioners, the government last night announced that a commission would be constituted today to investigate the charge that \$50,000 was stolen from the public treasury by means of a pretended road work contract.

At the same time Mr. Bradshaw, who laid the charges, stated that the royal commission would establish that not only \$50,000 was stolen, but that hundreds of thousands were stolen in this way.

It is in connection with this charge that J. P. Brown, chief clerk of the roads branch, is now a fugitive.

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